GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:948
ANSWERED ON:04.12.2015
Paid News
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Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has come to know about some confirmed cases of paid news in the country during various elections or otherwise during the last three years and the current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action taken by the Government against the erring media companies and the persons involved/benefitted from the paid news; and

(d) the corrective steps being taken by the Government to check paid news cases?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING [(COL RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE (Retd.)]

(a) to (c): In so far as Print Media is concerned, the Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body has been set up to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and also to inculcate the principles of self-regulation among the press. The PCI takes cognizance, suo moto or on complaints of contents in print media which are in violation of the Norms of the Journalistic Conduct. The PCI adjudicates upon such cases under section 14 of the Press Council Act, 1978.
Most of the complaint cases related to Paid News have been received by the Election Commission of India during the last three years and the current year. Out of these cases, 12 confirmed cases in print media have been adjudicated by the PCI whereas no specific instance of paid news in electronic media has come to the notice of the Government.
The list of 12 confirmed Paid News cases in print media is at Annexure.

(d) Election Commission of India has formulated various guidelines to restrict paid news during elections. The Commission vide its comprehensive guideline on paid news dated 27th August, 2012 has constituted District level and State level Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC). The MCMC examines all the newspapers, print media, electronic media, cable networks etc. and keep records of the advertisements, advertorials, discussions and interviews relating to the candidates and parties. The Returning Officers concerned, issue notices to the candidates with regard to suspected cases of Paid News. The accounting teams calculate the expenditure involved in the incident of Paid News at the DAVP/DPIR rate, whichever is lower, and mention it in the election expenditure account of the candidates. In cases where the MCMC arrives at a finding of confirmation of complaint of Paid News, it issues due notice to candidate, as per existing guidelines of ECI.
Besides, the Commission vide its letter dated 3rd February, 2011 to M/o Law & Justice had recommended to add "Paid News" in category of corrupt practices or electoral offences. The Commission had recommended that the provision should be made in the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to include publishing and abetting of publishing of "Paid News" for furthering the prospects of election of any candidate as an electoral offence under Chapter III of Part VII of the R.P. Act, 1951 with exemplary punishment of a minimum of two years imprisonment.
As regards the Print Media, PCI has created public awareness on the issue by putting its guidelines advising media and authorities on election process in public domain.
As regards the Electronic Media, all private satellite TV channels are required to adhere to the Programme and Advertising Codes prescribed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994 framed thereunder which contain a gamut of criteria to be followed while carrying programmes and advertisement in such TV channels. The aforesaid Advertising Code mentions that any advertisement should be clearly distinguished from programme.
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